

Review Article

PSYCHOLOGICAL ADJUSTMENT IN ADOPTED ADULTS: IDENTITY DEVELOPMENT, ANXIETY, AND ASSERTIVENESS – A NARRATIVE REVIEW

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ABSTRACT

Adoption is widely recognized as a positive developmental intervention; however, its long-term psychological consequences remain the subject of ongoing debate. This narrative review synthesizes current evidence on psychological adjustment among adopted adults, with a particular focus on identity development, anxiety, and assertiveness. The reviewed literature indicates that adoption itself should not be regarded as either a protective or a risk factor for psychological well-being. Instead, long-term outcomes are influenced by the interaction of attachment security, family functioning, and openness about adoption, resilience, and social support. Identity development is conceptualized as a normative developmental process, while evidence regarding anxiety suggests that emotional adjustment is more strongly associated with early life experiences and family relationships than with adoption status alone. The review also highlights the limited research on assertiveness among adopted adults and identifies this as an important direction for future investigation. Overall, the findings support a resilience-oriented perspective and emphasize the importance of developmental and relational factors in promoting positive psychological adjustment throughout adulthood.

Keywords: adoption, adopted adults, psychological adjustment, identity development, anxiety, assertiveness, resilience.

INTRODUCTION

Adoption has long been regarded as a positive developmental intervention that provides children with permanent family environments, emotional security, and opportunities for healthy psychosocial development. Although the majority of adopted individuals demonstrate successful adjustment throughout childhood and adulthood, the long-term psychological consequences of adoption continue to generate considerable scientific debate. Over the past four decades, research has produced inconsistent findings regarding the mental health of adopted individuals. While some studies have reported elevated rates of internalizing symptoms, behavioral difficulties, and identity-related concerns among adoptees, others have found psychological outcomes comparable to those of individuals raised in their biological families (Brodzinsky, 1993; Collishaw *et al.*, 1998; Rushton & Minnis, 2017).

These inconsistencies have gradually shifted the focus of adoption research from a deficit-oriented perspective toward a developmental framework emphasizing psychological adjustment. Rather than conceptualizing adoption as either a protective or a risk factor in isolation, contemporary researchers increasingly recognize that psychological outcomes emerge through the interaction of multiple biological, developmental, familial, and social influences. Early adverse experiences, attachment security, adoptive family functioning, openness regarding adoption, social support, and resilience collectively contribute to long-term psychosocial adaptation (Palacios & Brodzinsky, 2010; Juffer & van IJzendoorn, 2005).

Among the psychological domains examined in adoption research, identity development has received the greatest empirical attention. Identity formation represents one of the fundamental developmental tasks of adolescence and early adulthood (Erikson, 1968).

For adopted individuals, however, identity development may involve additional challenges associated with integrating biological and adoptive family histories into a coherent sense of self. Questions concerning biological origins, family continuity, genetic heritage, and personal belonging frequently become particularly salient during adolescence and adulthood. Nevertheless, contemporary evidence suggests that identity exploration among adoptees should be regarded primarily as a normative developmental process rather than an indicator of psychopathology (Brodzinsky, 1993; Grotevant, 1997). Anxiety constitutes another important dimension of psychological adjustment that has attracted considerable research interest. Although several investigations have reported increased emotional vulnerability among adopted individuals, particularly those exposed to early adversity, institutional care, or disrupted attachment relationships, findings remain inconsistent. Meta-analytic and longitudinal evidence increasingly indicates that family functioning, attachment quality, and post-adoption experiences explain substantially more variance in psychological adjustment than adoption status itself (Juffer & van IJzendoorn, 2005; Rushton & Minnis, 2017). These findings highlight the importance of examining psychological outcomes within a broader developmental context.

Compared with identity development and anxiety, considerably less attention has been devoted to assertiveness. Despite its established association with self-esteem, interpersonal competence, emotional regulation, and psychological well-being, assertiveness has rarely been examined in studies involving adopted adults. Consequently, relatively little is known about how interpersonal confidence, self-expression, and boundary-setting develop among individuals with lived experience of adoption. This gap limits current understanding of psychosocial adjustment and represents an important direction for future research.

Another limitation within the existing literature concerns geographical representation. Most empirical evidence has been generated in North America and Western Europe, whereas considerably fewer studies

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have examined adoption experiences in Eastern European or other underrepresented cultural contexts. Consequently, the generalizability of existing findings remains uncertain, emphasizing the need for broader cross-cultural perspectives on adoption and adult psychological adjustment.

Against this background, the present narrative review synthesizes classical and contemporary evidence concerning psychological adjustment among adopted adults, focusing specifically on identity development, anxiety, and assertiveness. Rather than examining these constructs independently, the review conceptualizes them as interconnected dimensions of long-term psychosocial adaptation. By integrating developmental, clinical, and interpersonal perspectives, this review aims to identify areas of consensus and controversy within the literature, highlight existing research gaps, and provide recommendations for future research and psychological practice.

CONCEPTUALIZING PSYCHOLOGICAL ADJUSTMENT IN ADOPTION

Psychological adjustment is generally defined as an individual's capacity to maintain emotional well-being, establish satisfying interpersonal relationships, and function effectively across various domains of life despite experiencing developmental challenges or stressful life events. Contemporary developmental psychology conceptualizes adjustment not as the absence of psychological symptoms but as a dynamic process involving successful adaptation to continuously changing personal and environmental demands (Masten, 2014; Rutter, 2012).

Within adoption research, the concept of psychological adjustment has undergone substantial theoretical development over the past several decades. Early investigations were largely based on a deficit-oriented model that primarily compared the prevalence of emotional and behavioral problems between adopted and non-adopted populations. This approach frequently portrayed adoption as a potential risk factor for psychopathology, emphasizing elevated rates of anxiety, depression, behavioral difficulties, and psychiatric service utilization among adopted children and adolescents (Brodzinsky & Schechter, 1990; Brodzinsky, 1993).

Although these studies made important contributions to understanding adoption-related experiences, they were increasingly criticized for oversimplifying psychological development by attributing observed differences primarily to adoption status. More recent perspectives argue that such comparisons fail to acknowledge the considerable heterogeneity among adopted individuals. Experiences before adoption, including neglect, institutionalization, abuse, or multiple caregiver disruptions, vary substantially across individuals and frequently exert stronger influences on long-term psychological functioning than adoption itself (Palacios & Brodzinsky, 2010; Juffer & van IJzendoorn, 2005).

Consequently, contemporary adoption research increasingly adopts a developmental systems perspective, viewing psychological adjustment as the product of continuous interactions between biological characteristics, developmental history, family relationships, and broader sociocultural environments. From this perspective, adoption should be understood as one developmental context among many rather than as a direct determinant of psychological outcomes. Individual adaptation reflects the cumulative influence of numerous protective and risk factors operating throughout childhood, adolescence, and adulthood.

Attachment theory provides one of the most influential frameworks for explaining psychological adjustment among adopted individuals.

According to Bowlby's attachment theory, early care giving relationships shape internal working models that influence emotional regulation, interpersonal trust, and future relationships. Children who experience neglect or repeated disruptions in care giving before adoption may initially demonstrate attachment-related difficulties; however, evidence consistently suggests that stable, responsive adoptive families can facilitate substantial developmental recovery. Secure attachment relationships established after adoption have repeatedly been associated with improved emotional regulation, greater self-esteem, stronger interpersonal functioning, and lower levels of psychological distress (Juffer & van IJzendoorn, 2005; Rushton & Minnis, 2017).

Developmental theories similarly emphasize the importance of identity integration in successful psychological adjustment. Erikson (1968) described identity formation as the central developmental task of adolescence, while later adoption researchers proposed that adopted individuals frequently integrate experiences originating from both biological and adoptive family systems. Rather than representing a source of pathology, this process may constitute an additional developmental task requiring autobiographical integration and meaning-making (Brodzinsky, 1993; Grotevant, 1997).

Another concept that has gained increasing attention is resilience. Historically, resilience was conceptualized as an individual personality characteristic. Contemporary research, however, defines resilience as a dynamic developmental process through which individuals achieve positive adaptation despite exposure to significant adversity (Masten, 2014). Within adoption research, resilience helps explain why many adopted adults demonstrate healthy emotional functioning, satisfying interpersonal relationships, and successful educational and occupational outcomes despite early adverse experiences. Protective factors such as supportive parenting, secure attachment, social connectedness, adaptive coping strategies, and open family communication consistently contribute to resilient developmental trajectories.

An important implication of this multidimensional perspective is that adoption should neither be idealized nor pathologized. Although some adopted individuals experience emotional difficulties, identity-related concerns, or anxiety during particular developmental periods, these outcomes should not be interpreted as inevitable consequences of adoption. Instead, psychological adjustment reflects the interaction between developmental experiences, environmental opportunities, interpersonal relationships, and individual adaptive capacities. Consequently, understanding adult adoptees' psychological functioning requires moving beyond simple comparisons between adopted and non-adopted populations toward identifying the mechanisms that facilitate successful long-term adaptation.

This conceptual framework provides the foundation for the present review. Identity development, anxiety, and assertiveness are therefore examined not as isolated psychological constructs but as interconnected dimensions of broader psychological adjustment. Such an integrative perspective better reflects the complexity of adult adoptees' developmental experiences and provides a more comprehensive understanding of long-term psychological well-being than traditional deficit-oriented approaches.

IDENTITY DEVELOPMENT IN ADOPTED ADULTS

Identity development constitutes one of the central developmental tasks throughout adolescence and early adulthood and has consistently remained one of the most extensively investigated topics in adoption research. While identity formation is a universal

developmental process, adopted individuals often encounter additional developmental tasks associated with integrating biological, adoptive, and personal life histories into a coherent sense of self. Consequently, adoption researchers increasingly argue that identity should not be viewed as a static personal characteristic but rather as an evolving developmental process shaped by relationships, life experiences, and social contexts.

Erikson's psychosocial theory provides the primary theoretical foundation for understanding identity development. According to Erikson (1968), adolescence is characterized by the developmental conflict between identity and role confusion, during which individuals seek continuity between their past experiences, present self-concept, and future aspirations. Successful resolution of this developmental task contributes to psychological stability, autonomy, and interpersonal confidence. Although Erikson did not specifically examine adoption, his theory has been widely applied to explain why adopted individuals may experience additional identity-related questions concerning biological heritage, family continuity, and personal belonging.

Building upon Erikson's theoretical framework, Brodzinsky (1993) proposed that adoption introduces developmental tasks that extend beyond normative identity formation. Rather than conceptualizing adoption as inherently pathological, Brodzinsky argued that adopted individuals face additional psychological challenges associated with integrating adoption into their personal identity. Importantly, these challenges should not be interpreted as evidence of maladjustment but rather as normative developmental processes requiring cognitive and emotional adaptation. This perspective fundamentally shifted adoption research away from deficit-oriented interpretations toward a developmental understanding of psychological adjustment.

One of the most frequently discussed themes within adoption literature concerns biological identity. Many adopted adults report curiosity regarding their biological parents, family medical history, genetic characteristics, and the circumstances surrounding their adoption. Earlier research often interpreted these experiences as indicators of dissatisfaction with adoptive families. Contemporary studies, however, increasingly reject this interpretation. Instead, searching for biological origins is understood as an attempt to achieve autobiographical continuity and integrate fragmented aspects of personal history into a coherent life narrative. Consequently, interest in biological relatives should not automatically be interpreted as reduced attachment to adoptive parents.

The quality of communication within adoptive families appears to play a decisive role in identity development. Numerous studies indicate that openness regarding adoption facilitates healthier psychological adjustment than secrecy or delayed disclosure. Children raised in environments where adoption is discussed honestly and sensitively generally demonstrate greater emotional security, stronger family relationships, and more coherent identity development. In contrast, environments characterized by avoidance or stigmatization of adoption may increase uncertainty, shame, and confusion regarding personal identity. These findings suggest that family communication functions not only as a protective factor for emotional well-being but also as an essential mechanism supporting healthy identity integration.

Identity development should also be understood within broader sociocultural contexts. Experiences of stigma, discrimination, cultural discontinuity, or ethnic differences between adoptive and biological families may influence how adopted individuals construct their identities. Transracial and international adoptees, in particular, often negotiate multiple cultural identities simultaneously, requiring the

integration of family, ethnic, and cultural experiences into a coherent sense of self. Recent research therefore increasingly conceptualizes identity as multidimensional rather than singular, emphasizing flexibility and integration rather than rigid developmental outcomes.

Importantly, empirical findings regarding identity-related adjustment remain heterogeneous. While several investigations report greater identity-related uncertainty among adopted individuals, others demonstrate little difference between adopted and non-adopted adults after accounting for family functioning, attachment security, and social support. Collishaw *et al.*, (1998) reported generally positive psychosocial functioning among adopted adults despite modest increases in emotional vulnerability within particular subgroups. Likewise, Fletcher (1997) observed that although adopted adults demonstrated slightly lower overall psychosocial adjustment than non-adopted individuals, the majority functioned within normative psychological ranges. These findings collectively challenge simplistic assumptions that adoption inevitably compromises identity development.

Contemporary adoption research increasingly emphasizes resilience and narrative integration as central components of healthy identity development. Rather than eliminating questions regarding biological origins, successful identity formation involves integrating adoption into one's broader life story in ways that promote psychological coherence, self-acceptance, and interpersonal security. This perspective aligns with positive developmental models suggesting that identity is continuously reconstructed across the lifespan through meaningful interpersonal relationships, reflective self-understanding, and adaptive coping.

Taken together, existing evidence indicates that identity development represents neither a universal source of vulnerability nor a marker of psychopathology among adopted adults. Instead, identity should be conceptualized as a dynamic developmental process influenced by attachment relationships, family communication, opportunities for exploration, cultural context, and individual resilience. Understanding these interacting processes provides an essential framework for interpreting subsequent psychological outcomes, including anxiety, interpersonal functioning, and assertiveness.

ANXIETY AMONG ADOPTED ADULTS

Anxiety is one of the most frequently examined indicators of psychological adjustment within adoption research. Although anxiety represents a normal emotional response to perceived threat, persistent or excessive anxiety may substantially impair emotional well-being, interpersonal functioning, occupational performance, and overall quality of life. Consequently, numerous researchers have investigated whether adopted individuals demonstrate increased vulnerability to anxiety compared with individuals raised in their biological families. Despite several decades of research, however, empirical findings remain inconsistent, reflecting the complexity of psychological adaptation following adoption.

Early investigations frequently suggested that adopted individuals were at increased risk of emotional difficulties, including anxiety disorders and other internalizing symptoms. These findings were often interpreted within a vulnerability framework, proposing that adoption itself constituted a developmental risk factor. Brodzinsky and colleagues argued that adopted individuals encounter unique developmental challenges associated with identity formation, loss, separation, and biological uncertainty, all of which may contribute to increased emotional vulnerability during specific developmental periods (Brodzinsky, 1993; Brodzinsky & Schechter, 1990). However, these authors also emphasized that adoption should not be

conceptualized as a pathological condition but rather as a developmental experience requiring adaptation.

Subsequent research questioned the assumption that adoption status alone explains elevated anxiety. Increasingly, investigators demonstrated that psychological outcomes vary considerably depending on pre-adoption experiences, including exposure to neglect, abuse, institutional care, repeated caregiver changes, or prenatal adversity. These early experiences have been associated with alterations in emotional regulation, stress responsiveness, and attachment security, potentially increasing susceptibility to anxiety later in life. Consequently, contemporary developmental models distinguish between the effects of adoption itself and the effects of adverse experiences preceding adoption.

Attachment theory provides an important explanatory framework for understanding these findings. According to Bowlby, secure attachment relationships facilitate emotional regulation and the development of internal models characterized by safety and trust. Numerous adoption studies indicate that children placed in nurturing and emotionally responsive adoptive families frequently demonstrate substantial recovery in emotional functioning despite experiencing adversity before adoption. Conversely, insecure attachment patterns may contribute to heightened interpersonal sensitivity, fear of rejection, uncertainty, and chronic anxiety. Therefore, attachment quality appears to represent a more powerful predictor of long-term emotional adjustment than biological relatedness.

Identity development constitutes another mechanism through which anxiety may emerge. During adolescence and adulthood, adopted individuals often encounter questions regarding biological origins, family history, and personal continuity. While these experiences represent normative developmental processes for many adoptees, unresolved identity-related uncertainty may increase emotional distress in some individuals. Nevertheless, contemporary research emphasizes that curiosity regarding biological parents should not automatically be interpreted as evidence of psychological maladjustment. Instead, identity exploration frequently reflects healthy developmental adaptation and autobiographical meaning-making.

Despite theoretical explanations suggesting increased vulnerability, empirical evidence remains mixed. Several longitudinal investigations have reported only modest differences between adopted and non-adopted adults after controlling for socioeconomic status, family functioning, and early adversity. Other studies have found no statistically significant differences in anxiety symptoms, suggesting that supportive family environments and adaptive coping strategies substantially reduce potential psychological risks associated with adoption. These findings collectively challenge simplistic assumptions that adoption inevitably leads to elevated anxiety.

The findings of the present Georgian study are broadly consistent with this contemporary perspective. Contrary to the initial hypothesis, statistical analyses revealed no significant differences in anxiety levels between adults raised in adoptive families and those raised in biological families. Although individual variability was observed within both groups, adoption status alone did not significantly predict anxiety. These findings support an ecological understanding of psychological adjustment in which emotional functioning is determined by multiple interacting developmental and environmental influences rather than by family structure alone.

Recent adoption research has increasingly shifted from identifying risk toward understanding resilience. Many adopted adults report levels of life satisfaction, psychological well-being, occupational functioning, and interpersonal adjustment comparable to those

observed in the general population. Consequently, anxiety should be viewed as one possible developmental outcome rather than an inevitable consequence of adoption. Individual differences appear to depend largely on the interaction between attachment relationships, family communication, identity integration, resilience, and broader social support systems.

Taken together, existing evidence suggests that anxiety among adopted adults is best understood within a multidimensional developmental framework. Adoption may introduce experiences that require additional psychological adaptation; however, emotional adjustment ultimately reflects the cumulative influence of biological, developmental, familial, and social factors operating across the lifespan. Future research should therefore move beyond simple comparisons between adopted and non-adopted populations and instead investigate the mechanisms through which protective and risk factors shape long-term emotional well-being.

ASSERTIVENESS AND INTERPERSONAL FUNCTIONING

Compared with identity development and anxiety, assertiveness remains a substantially underexplored construct within adoption research. Most studies examining adopted individuals have focused on emotional adjustment, attachment, behavioral functioning, depression, or identity-related concerns; while relatively little attention has been paid to interpersonal confidence, boundary-setting, and self-expression. This is a significant limitation, because assertiveness is closely connected to self-esteem, social competence, emotional regulation, and psychological well-being.

Assertiveness is generally understood as the ability to express one's thoughts, feelings, needs, and rights directly and respectfully without violating the rights of others. It differs from passivity, where individuals suppress their own needs, and from aggression, where personal needs are expressed at the expense of others. From a psychological perspective, assertiveness is not merely a communication skill; it reflects a broader sense of self-worth, interpersonal security, and confidence in one's right to participate equally in relationships.

For adopted adults, assertiveness may be theoretically relevant for several reasons. First, adoption-related identity questions may influence self-concept and interpersonal confidence. Individuals who experience uncertainty regarding their origins, belonging, or family continuity may also struggle with expressing their needs or asserting personal boundaries in emotionally significant relationships. Second, early experiences of separation, neglect, or relational disruption may affect expectations of rejection or abandonment, potentially shaping more passive or avoidant interpersonal patterns. Third, social stigma or insensitive attitudes toward adoption may reduce openness and confidence in discussing adoption-related experiences.

Nevertheless, it would be inaccurate to assume that adopted adults are generally less assertive than individuals raised in biological families. Existing evidence suggests that interpersonal functioning among adoptees is highly heterogeneous and depends more strongly on attachment security, family communication, self-esteem, and social support than on adoption status alone. Adoptive family environments that encourage autonomy, emotional expression, and open communication may support the development of healthy assertiveness. Conversely, secrecy, emotional invalidation, or fear-based family communication may limit opportunities for confident self-expression.

The empirical findings of the Georgian master's study are consistent with this more nuanced interpretation. The study found no statistically significant differences between adopted adults and adults raised in biological families across measured assertiveness dimensions. This suggests that adoption status alone does not determine assertiveness. Instead, assertive functioning appears to emerge from broader developmental and relational conditions, including self-esteem, attachment experiences, social confidence, and opportunities for autonomous decision-making.

The limited attention given to assertiveness in adoption research represents an important gap. Future studies should examine assertiveness together with related constructs such as self-esteem, self-efficacy, attachment security, interpersonal trust, and emotion regulation. Such an approach would allow researchers to understand not only whether adopted adults differ from non-adopted adults, but also which psychological mechanisms promote healthy interpersonal functioning. Clinically, this is important because assertiveness training, boundary-setting work, and self-esteem interventions may be useful for adopted adults who experience relational insecurity or difficulty expressing personal needs.

Overall, assertiveness should be considered a meaningful component of psychological adjustment among adopted adults. Although it has not been sufficiently studied, it offers an important bridge between identity, emotional well-being, and interpersonal relationships. Integrating assertiveness into adoption research may therefore contribute to a more complete understanding of adult adoptees' psychosocial functioning.

PROTECTIVE FACTORS PROMOTING PSYCHOLOGICAL ADJUSTMENT

Although much of the early literature focused on the psychological risks associated with adoption, contemporary research increasingly emphasizes resilience and positive adaptation. Most adopted individuals develop into psychologically healthy adults, indicating that adoption itself does not determine long-term psychological functioning. Instead, successful adjustment is largely influenced by the presence of protective factors operating throughout development. One of the strongest protective factors consistently identified in the literature is the quality of the adoptive family environment. Warm, emotionally responsive, and supportive parenting contributes to secure attachment, emotional regulation, and positive self-esteem. Adoptive families characterized by trust, acceptance, and consistent emotional support create conditions that facilitate healthy psychological development despite possible early adverse experiences.

Family communication also plays a central role in psychological adjustment. Numerous studies have demonstrated that openness regarding adoption promotes healthier identity development and greater emotional security than secrecy or avoidance. Children who are informed about their adoption in developmentally appropriate ways and who feel comfortable discussing adoption-related issues with their parents generally demonstrate better psychological outcomes during adolescence and adulthood. Open communication enables adopted individuals to integrate adoption into their personal identity rather than perceiving it as a source of shame or uncertainty. Attachment security represents another important protective mechanism. Secure attachment relationships provide emotional stability and facilitate adaptive coping with stressful life events. Even individuals exposed to neglect or institutional care before adoption frequently demonstrate significant developmental recovery after placement in stable adoptive families. This evidence highlights the

remarkable capacity for developmental plasticity throughout childhood.

Social support further contributes to long-term adjustment. Positive relationships with family members, friends, romantic partners, and mental health professionals provide emotional resources that facilitate coping with developmental challenges. Participation in adoption support groups may also reduce feelings of isolation by normalizing adoption-related experiences and providing opportunities for shared understanding.

The concept of resilience has become increasingly influential within adoption research. Rather than representing an innate personality trait, resilience is now understood as a dynamic process through which individuals successfully adapt despite adversity. Many adopted adults demonstrate high educational achievement, satisfying interpersonal relationships, occupational success, and overall life satisfaction, illustrating that early adversity does not inevitably predict poor psychological outcomes.

Collectively, these findings indicate that psychological adjustment among adopted adults is determined less by adoption itself than by the interaction of supportive relationships, secure attachment, open family communication, social connectedness, and adaptive coping resources. Future interventions should therefore strengthen these protective factors rather than focusing exclusively on risk reduction.

CLINICAL IMPLICATIONS AND FUTURE RESEARCH

The findings reviewed in this article have important implications for both psychological practice and future research. First, clinicians should avoid pathologizing adoption. Although adoption introduces unique developmental experiences, it should not automatically be considered a source of psychological dysfunction. Assessment should instead focus on developmental history, attachment experiences, family functioning, current interpersonal relationships, and available protective resources.

Therapeutic work with adopted adults should pay particular attention to identity development and family narratives. Some individuals may benefit from exploring questions regarding biological origins, family continuity, and personal identity within a supportive therapeutic environment. Importantly, curiosity about biological relatives should be understood as a normal developmental experience rather than evidence of dissatisfaction with adoptive families.

The review also highlights several significant gaps within the existing literature. First, much of adoption research continues to focus on children and adolescents, whereas comparatively little attention has been devoted to adulthood. Second, assertiveness remains a largely neglected construct despite its theoretical importance for interpersonal functioning and psychological adjustment. Third, most available evidence originates from North America and Western Europe, limiting the generalizability of findings across different cultural contexts.

Future research should therefore prioritize longitudinal investigations following adoptees across the lifespan, incorporate broader measures of interpersonal functioning and resilience, and expand research within underrepresented cultural settings. Greater emphasis should also be placed on identifying mechanisms that promote successful adaptation rather than merely documenting psychological difficulties. Such research may contribute to more effective psychological interventions, adoption policies, and support services for adoptive families.

CONCLUSION

Psychological adjustment among adopted adults represents a complex developmental process influenced by biological, psychological, familial, and social factors. Contemporary evidence indicates that adoption should not be conceptualized as either inherently protective or inherently harmful. Instead, adoption represents one developmental context within which individuals negotiate identity, relationships, emotional regulation, and psychological well-being.

Identity development remains one of the most distinctive aspects of adoption. Although adopted individuals may encounter additional developmental questions concerning biological origins and family continuity, these experiences are increasingly understood as normative components of identity formation rather than indicators of psychopathology. Similarly, research examining anxiety demonstrates that emotional outcomes are more strongly associated with attachment security, early developmental experiences, family functioning, and resilience than with adoption status alone.

The literature concerning assertiveness remains limited. Nevertheless, available evidence suggests that interpersonal confidence and self-expression develop through broader psychosocial processes involving attachment, self-esteem, family communication, and social support. Consequently, assertiveness should be considered an important component of psychological adjustment and deserves greater attention in future adoption research.

Perhaps the most important conclusion emerging from this review is that adoption should be viewed through a resilience-oriented rather than deficit-oriented perspective. The majority of adopted adults successfully establish coherent identities, maintain satisfying interpersonal relationships, and demonstrate healthy emotional functioning. These findings emphasize the importance of supportive family environments, secure attachment relationships, open communication, and resilience in promoting positive long-term psychological adjustment.

Although substantial progress has been made over the past four decades, important research gaps remain. Future investigations should extend beyond simple comparisons between adopted and non-adopted individuals and instead examine the developmental mechanisms that facilitate successful adaptation across diverse cultural contexts. Such an approach will contribute not only to scientific understanding but also to evidence-based clinical practice and adoption policy.

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